1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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181 and singing, playing and listening to music, eating festively, drinking rice beer, and implicitly sexual activity; in practice,
[521] these are the activities characteristic of a Santal festival. When a traditional and typically uneducated Santal meets another from a distant region, one of the first questions asked will be, "How is pleasure in your region?" The reply will focus on the
[152] activities mentioned above. Indeed, the only occasion in which I observed a fully sober Santal male adult burst into tears was during such a festive event. When I asked the old man why he was weeping at such a time, he replied, "The sounds of the drum remind me of the pleasure of my youth and of my
[279] deceased wife who shared in my pleasure." It will be recalled
[192] that it was rice beer which enabled the propagation of the Santal to proceed in the beginning of things, and if there is one word which is more frequently uttered than any other, more frequent even than the sound of festive drums, it is the cry of "*haṇḍi, haṇḍi haṇḍi*" (rice beer; from *handia,* Hindi = an earthenware container). As the Santal sing:
[539]

> Oh "flower friend"*
> I am thirsty and I am hungry;
> But hearing the sound of the drums under the canopy†
> My thirst and hunger are banished.

181 The Santal pleasure complex is of primary importance in
527 considering recent economic and political events, but here the concern is with "pleasure" as a shared understanding serving the solidarity of the Santal. As the Santal think of it, "pleasure"

[192] * A "flower friend" or *phul* (as in Hindi *phul* = flower) is a formally cele-
[512] brated ritual friendship.
[192] † The "canopy" or *chamda* is utilized in wedding ceremonies to cover the
[585] area in which the ceremony takes place.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

k. Concerning mutual behaviour and respect.

At the time when we were boys, all members of a family living in the same village greeted each other in the morning, as soon as they got up, and the people in the village also greeted each other when they met, and when members of a family go anywhere on a visit or come back, then also they greet each other. And when the young people of a village go to attend a festival, they bow to the Mạñjhi haṛam and Mạñjhi buḍhi (the village headman and his wife), when they leave. In the house the master and his wife once daily are sure to kiss their sons and daughters-in-law, big or small. The young men and girls all honour the old men and ladies much. What these say to instruct or exhort them, this they fix in their mind. They are not impudent towards old men and women; in their presence they do not sit down on a bedstead even; young men and girls do not drink beer or liquor; the young men do not go to a place where an ox is eaten either. Women pay much heed to what the men say; they do not let their hair down in the presence of men. The village people honour the village headman and his deputy much, and these two also do not neglect what the village people say. 576 [622] [593] [561]

Nowadays the age has been spoilt. The women do not honour the men; the sons do not respect their old fathers either; daughters are also very impudent towards their mothers; they do not greet each other either; they pass each other like animals; the young men and girls drink an awful amount of beer; when old men come, they do not get up either; when old men or the parents upbraid them, the young men and girls answer back, or they run away in the sulks, and only when coaxed a good deal, will they come back home. The women and the children have become the kings in this age. Some few people are good even at the present time; but most people have become bad. The village headman also judge covetously (taking bribes), and the village people do not follow the headman's order either. Also co-parents-in-law are quarrelling a good deal in the present age; formerly they never quarrelled, they were very respectful towards each other. The ancestors said: "Rice like flowers, curry like fish, liquor like fire, and a friend like a co-parent-in-law, where will you find such a one?" 178 576 [593] [561] [622] [539]

l. Concerning friendship.

Living in the same village all are relatives, quite so; but there is not friendship with all there. In a village many people are on friendly terms with each other, and some people also are on good terms with each other, but friendship they have only with one or two others, and intimate friendship they have only one with one other, and this is very rarely found. Intimate friends will give even their life to help each other in calamity and danger. People who are intimate friends tell each other the sorrows and joys of their heart, and in all matters they help each other, when there is any necessity. In the village elderly men 572

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

572 also become intimate friends, and also elderly women; but the time for becoming intimate friends is really when men and women are young.

Cattle-herd boys become great comrades, and mostly at this time intimate friendship between them is established. Those among the comrades whose hearts are especially bound together, become intimate friends; they stay together, they blow the flute, they kill birds, hares, and peafowls; they sing, they drive the cattle about by turns, and they help each other when there is any danger. They eat rice from the same leaf-plate, and when they kill birds or anything they divide and eat them. When they kill a hare, they give the killer the hind half. Persons who have become intimate friends in their boyhood, do not forget each other even when they have grown old, they remain friends all life long. When they, after having lost sight of each other, meet again long afterwards, they become very glad; they kiss each other.

Girls also become intimate friends in the same way, and it lasts all life long with them. Instead of the fellowship of the boys girls become what is called karam-branch friends. If the hearts of two girls have been bound fast together, they will at a karam festival* take two leaves of a branch and put these upon each other's head and thereupon salute all the people there. Afterwards they give the village people beer and food. These two do not address each other using their names, but address each other saying "karam branch". Young men and girls do not become intimate friends, except in connexion with marriage.

[178] Nowadays the intimacy of former days is being lost; the mind of the people is going to the bad. People mostly look out for their own happiness, let other people have whatever may happen.

m. Sticking together of the village people.

621 628 The Santals consider it an honour when their village is honoured, and they feel it a dishonour when their village is dishonoured; therefore if some one in their village gets into a quarrel with people of another village, then the whole village stands up for him. And if they hear any disgraceful statement concerning their own village, they apply to the headman of their village; thereupon they all, the village headman included, seize such people and say to them: Prove to us what you have spoken about us; otherwise we are not letting you off. If they are unable to substantiate it, they fine them very heavily. If any village has become famed, then the people of this village, when meeting with the people of the country in connexion with any matter, feel themselves high like hills; they take pride in the reputation of their village, even when they themselves are fools.

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[137] * The karam is a large forest tree, Adina cordifolia H. f. & B. The karam festivals will be described later on.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

Relationship by courtesy

572 796

i. Flower friendship

Santal girls enter into various artificial relationship with their friends and address them with the endearing names of many flowers and leaves. At some places, such friendships are called *Phul Patao* which follows a regular ceremony, when two girls of the same mental, if not chronological age, pledge themselves to a friendship till death does them part. The main events of such ceremonies consist in mutual presents of clothes, and merry feasts. The final knot is tied when the two friends stick a particular flower in the hair of each other. Henceforth the friends will address each other by their flower-names e.g., *Akaṛ Baba* (a flower of a plant found in moist places, *Limnophila*, Roxburghiana, G. Don), *Keya phul* (a flower), *Karam phul*, *Karam Dàr* (the branch of a Karam tree), instead of their own names. Such friendships, very common in Bengal, have their prototypes among the Santals, for, we hear, they have such names for friends as *Gònga Jal* (the water of the Ganges). Enquiries revealed that men rarely enter into such ties and they are more common among the women-folk, who, sometimes even choose such friends from non-Santals.

572 796 551

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ii. Between neighbours

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A variant of such relationship, called *Nata*, is sometimes adopted between neighbours to pay

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42

576 sufficient respect to superiors or to show a corresponding affection to juniors, as would be proper in a common fraternity in the clan. Thus a younger [601] man addresses an elder as 'uncle' and a younger girl will choose to call a senior woman as 'elder sister.'

iii. Between mothers

572 An interesting tie is knit by Santal society between the mothers of an equal number of children. [596] Ceremonials are gone through to establish such [43] forms of friendship, called *Sàika*, when presents are [594] mutually exchanged and each of the friends treats some guests at feasts as a mark of the occasion.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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When news of the sex-experiences of youths and maids reaches the ears of their parents, they are sometimes rebuked. The mother warns the girl of untoward consequences and the boy's father may look for a bride for his son. But generally, as an educated Santal told us, the parents of boys do not bother very much about these things and treat the escapades as lightly as a dance or a drink.

Women and sex-life

With abundant facilities for social intercourse with men, it is but natural that women's sex-life should take the hetero-sexual turn early in their lives. But any description of Santal women's love-life will be incomplete without reference to their early friendships with members of their own sex. The society, we have already seen in our chapter of "Kinship Organisation" (page 149) favours the formation of artificial relationships like *Phul patao*, *Karamdiar*, *Kiya Phul* between girls, in which there is, very frequently, a strong emotional basis. Such 'flames' eat together, talk together and even sleep together, if possible. Sex-psychologists will readily ascribe a homo-sexual background for such attractions, when lovers of the same sex swear eternal fidelity in friendship till death do them part. Such friendships are almost rituals with some Santals, but it will be very difficult to trace any case of perversion

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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572 838 arising out of such ties and Santals are emphatic that there are no cases of homo-sexual aberrations.

836 In sex-life, unmarried women, divorcees and widows enjoy equal freedom with men to cohabit with men of their choice, barring of course the prohibited degrees of marriage and the clan rules of exogamy. But excessive cases are taken notice of [848] by parents and superiors, and if pregnancy results, village elders step in to find out the man responsible. Very frequently such scandals are avoided by a marriage between the parties.

837 The Santal hates adultery. If a married woman cohabits with others, she is taken to task by her parents and her husband's people. Generally, such erring wives are divorced by the husband. Serious crimes like murders sometimes result from such offences and we remember an educated Santal nonchalantly blurting out, "if my wife commits adultery, I shall cut her into pieces." The following 837 folk-song contains the news of such an illicit union 533 being conveyed to a maternal uncle by his ne- 539 phew:—

Nephew: Eh mama, mamago, hatòmiñdo perkao akan.

Uncle: Nowa katha sakhi bhagna bin purao lekhan.
Hopon bohok're capò hòcòbin.

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

village and who also receive payment in cash and in kind for their work. They are thoroughly familiar with Santali, but their mother tongue is the village Bengali of the area. They observe their own caste rules and do not intermarry with the Santals, with whom they live on excellent terms. They have no part in the Santal village cult, and they make no contributions when collections are made throughout the village for festivals. Their own cult is locally characterized by *Dharma* worship; in one village a post is planted in the ground at the end of the month of *Pus*. On the first day of *Magh* (mid-January) the village Kamar stands on top of this post with a white cock in his hands, and after bowing to the four corners of the compass in turn he releases the cock, saying: "Take, Dharma, we give it to you." There is then a scramble among the Santal spectators to catch it, and the man who does so is rewarded by the gift of a sheep. This ceremony goes on alongside the Santal festival which is taking place at the same time.

Occasionally there are in Santal villages isolated houses belonging to people of other castes. In one village one finds a Muci family, leather workers whose chief occupation is to make and mend drums; in another a Tanti family, who are weavers. The Santals do not have a great regard for the Bauri, the most numerous of the cultivating castes in the area apart from themselves. Their chief complaint about the Bauri is that the latter will eat food left over by anyone, a practice which fills the Santals with horror. On the other hand, there are frequently close friendships between individual Santals and men of other castes. The practice of sealing a friendship by a symbolic exchange of gifts is prevalent, and there are instances where Santals have entered into such friendships with Bauris and, indeed, with folk of other races who are of the same sex. The usual method of cementing such friendships is known as the "flower friendship", which takes the form of an exchange of garlands, followed by mutual salutations and sharing beer or food together. Friendships sealed in this way result in an intimate relationship, a real sharing of burdens as well as of joys.

While some forms of exploitation have been checked, there are still many who appear to thrive on the ignorance of the Santal. I witnessed a scene in the village street of Kuchliaghati when a *Deko* trader was having dealings with the women of the village. He had come to collect from them quantities of resin from the *babla* tree, a species of acacia, and he was paying them by exchanging equal weights of salt for the resin. The